IN THE SPECIFICATION:

Please replace the paragraph on page 3, line 8 with the following rewritten paragraph:

--The five network elements described above (HLR, VLR, EIR, AuC, SMSC) can be thought of as essentially databases or database processing nodes. Unlike these database nodes, the MSC **110**, GMSC **112**, and IWMSC **132** are generally identified as network switching elements. Among their many functions, the MSC **110** and GMSC **112** are responsible for determining which cell site will take possession of a call. Such hand off control is facilitated by a communication link between the MSC **110** and an associated Base Station Controller (BSC) / Base Transceiver Station (BTS) pair **124**. A Tx/Rx cell site **126** may be associated with each BTS/BSC pair **124**. The GMSC **112** has the added distinction of providing a gateway interface to the Public Switched Telephone Network (PSTN) **114**; otherwise, MSC **110** and GMSC **112** functionality is very similar. Furthermore, as generally illustrated in Figure 1, the GMSC **112** is also coupled via signaling links to the four database nodes described above, and as such, all signaling message access to these database nodes is controlled and administered by the GMSC. Although not illustrated in Figure 1, the MSC may also be coupled directly to the database nodes. IWMSC **132** is typically an MSC **110** or a GMSC **112** that also has the function of inter-working between the SMSC **130** and the rest of the mobile network.--

Please replace the paragraph on page 5, line 10 with the following rewritten paragraph:

--Figure 2 illustrates a typical GSM network architecture, generally indicated by the numeral **150**, which includes a GMSC **154** that is linked to both an MSC **152** and a single HLR unit **156**. GMSC **154** includes a routing table **160**, while HLR **156** includes a database table **158**. Figure 3 also illustrates a typical GSM network architecture, generally indicated by the numeral **180**, which includes a GMSC **182** linked to several HLR units. More particularly, GMSC **182** is coupled via signaling links to HLR A **186**, HLR B **190**, and HLR C **194**, and necessarily to HLR database tables **188**, **192**, and **196**, respectively. In both Figures 2 and 3, GMSCs **154** and **182** may be connected to SS7 network **162**.--

Please replace the paragraph on page 8, line 4 with the following rewritten paragraph:

--United States Patent No. 5,878,347 to Joensuu, et al., (hereinafter, "the '347 Patent") the disclosure of which is hereby incorporated by reference in its entirety, discloses one approach to solving some of the problems identified and discussed above. The solution described in the '347 Patent involves the implementation of a new network element, referred to as a virtual HLR (vHLR). Figure 4 of the present application and the following description illustrates the function of the vHLR in the '347 patent. Referring to communication network **210** illustrated in Figure 4, a vHLR node **214** is placed in the communication network pathway between a GMSC **212** and a plurality of HLR nodes, HLR A **218**, HLR B **222**, and HLR C **226**. HLRs **218**, **222**, and **226** contain subscriber databases **220**, **224**, **228**, respectively. The GMSC **212** sends signaling messages to the vHLR node **214** requesting subscriber information where the particular subscriber is associated with an IMSI or MSISDN type mobile station

identification number. The vHLR **214** does not contain subscriber information; rather, the vHLR **214** contains a routing table **216** that correlates IMSI or MSISDN numbers with a particular HLR. More particularly, the routing table **216** contains information relating IMSI or MSISDN numbers to a corresponding network address associated with the HLR serving that IMSI or MSISDN subscriber.--

Please replace the paragraph on page 8, line 22 with the following rewritten paragraph:

--The message routing technique disclosed by the '347 Patent is a key element of the invention described therein. As generally illustrated in Figure 4, a call originating from SS7 network **162** results in MSISDN=919969000 being communicated to GMSC **212**. GMSC **212** originates a message **234** and sends the message to vHLR **214**. [[when]] When the vHLR node **214** receives a message **234** from the associated GMSC **212**, the message is addressed to and is delivered directly to the vHLR node **214**. The vHLR node **214** performs a table lookup, as described above, and re-routes the message to the appropriate HLR node, in this case HLR C **228**. This re-routing function is accomplished by altering the destination point code (DPC) of the message **236** routing label, such that the original DPC (PC=vHLR) is replaced by a new DPC (PC=HLR C). It is significant, and should be noted that the vHLR node **214** does not alter the origination point code (OPC) of the message routing label. That is, the OPC of the incoming message **234** is the same as the OPC of the outgoing message **236**, which is the point code of the GMSC **212**. Thus, the message arrives at HLR C **228** with an OPC equal to the point code of GMSC node **212**. HLR C **228** then responds

with a message **238** that is addressed to the GMSC **212**. The HLR C response message **238** is not routed back through the vHLR node **214**.--